

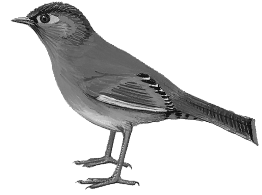
OMEI SHAN LIOCICHLA

Liocichla omeiensis

Critical —

Endangered —

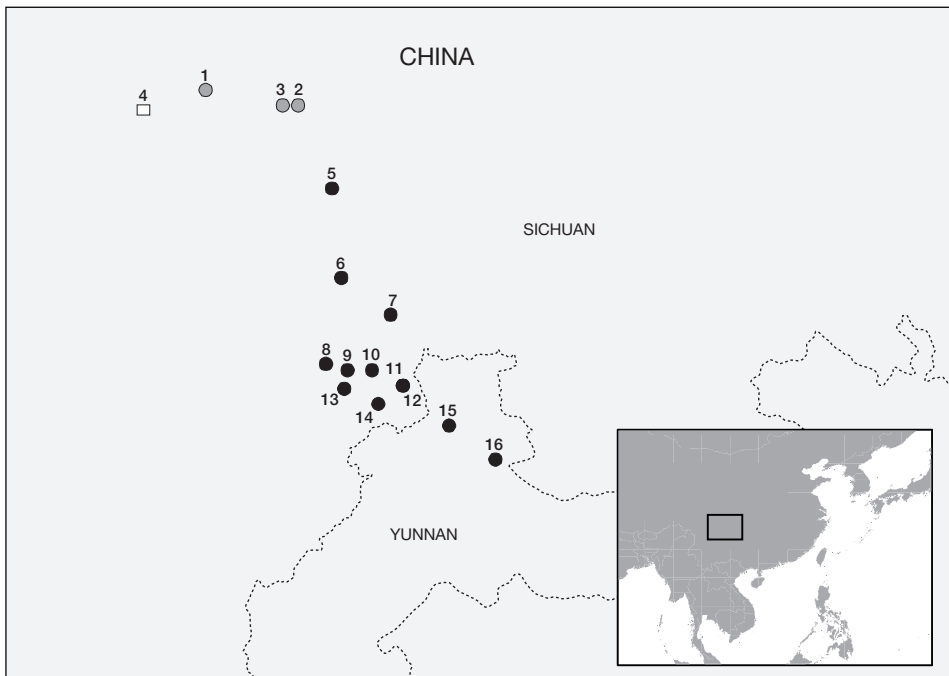
Vulnerable B1+2a,b,c,d,e; C1



This species has a small, declining population and range, which is also severely fragmented as a result of destruction of subtropical forest. It therefore qualifies as Vulnerable.

DISTRIBUTION The Omei Shan Liocichla is endemic to south-west mainland China, where it is known from several mountains ranges in south-central Sichuan, and has recently been found in the extreme north-east of Yunnan. Records (by province) are from:

■ **CHINA** ■ **Sichuan** **Zishi** township, Tianquan county, one collected, February 1961 (Yu Zhiwei *in litt.* 1997); **Caoba** township, Ya'an city, one collected, February 1959 (Yu Zhiwei *in litt.* 1997); Sichuan Agricultural University campus, **Ya'an county**, one collected, May 1973 (Yu Zhiwei *in litt.* 1997); **Erlang Shan**, undated (Cheng Tso-hsin 1987); **Emei Shan** (Omei Shan), August 1925, with many subsequent records (including in the 1990s) at the following sublocalities: Si Gi Pin (2,100–2,300 m), Gan Dien (2,130 m, August), Gien Fao Deng (1,980 m, July), Fuhu Si (March), Wannian temple (1,000 m, January–May), Huyan



The distribution of Omei Shan Liocichla *Liocichla omeiensis*: (1) Zishi; (2) Caoba; (3) Ya'an county; (4) Erlang Shan; (5) Emei Shan; (6) Dazhuba-Pingdeng; (7) Huanglianshan-Wuzhishan; (8) Mabian Dafengding; (9) Wobuzucha; (10) Xining; (11) Shuanghekou; (12) Baishuxi valley; (13) Ledugou; (14) Xining river; (15) Daxuecao; (16) Yanjin county.

● Fairly recent (1950–1979) ● Recent (1980–present) □ Undated

peak (March–April), Fuhu temple (March–April), Hongchun terrace (1,100 m, March–April), Xianfeng monastery (1,800 m, March–June), Xixian monastery (1,020 m, March), etc. (Shaw 1932, Delacour 1933, Cheng Tso-hsin *et al.* 1963b, Buck 1985, Robson 1986, Turton and Speight 1986, Jirle and Kjellan 1987, Goodwin 1987, Hornskov 1988, Nickel 1988, Olsson and Alström 1989, Kazmierczak 1990b, Jihmanner 1991, Kovacs 1991, Otani 1993, Kraageveld 1995, Kilburn 1997, Leven *et al.* 1997, Massie and Massie 1997, J. Martens *in litt.* 1999); **Dazhuba-Pingdeng**, Ebian and Mabian counties, one or two, May 1997 (Dowell *et al.* 1997, Dai Bo *et al.* 1998); **Huanglianshan-Wuzhishan**, Mabian, Muchuan and Pingshan counties, four collected on Wuzhishan, September–October 1973 (Yu Zhiwei *in litt.* 1997), one or two, April–May 1997 (Dowell *et al.* 1997, Dai Bo *et al.* 1998), at Wuzhishan, October–November 1999 (Dai Bo *in litt.* 1999); Womapu, **Mabian Dafengding** forest tract, June 1998 (Dai Bo 1998); Jinaoke, west slope of **Wobuzucha**, June 1998 (Dai Bo 1998); **Xining** township, near Tongmuxi village and on the south slope of Fengziyan mountain, Leibo country, May–June 1996 (Dai Bo 1996); source of Huoshaopeng valley, **Shuanghekou** township, Leibo country, May–June 1996 (Dai Bo 1996); source of Tongchanggou valley, Forest farm No. 211, **Baishuxi valley**, Leibo country, May–June 1996 (Dai Bo 1996); **Ledugou**, including the Huanglaxi valley, Forest farm No. 212, Leibo county, May–June 1996 (Dai Bo 1996), up to 13 seen in a day, c.2,000 m, May 1997, in very young replanted broadleaf forest (Dowell *et al.* 1997, Dai Bo *et al.* 1998); south of the **Xining river**, Leibo county, in the Xiaowan valley, Forest farm No. 213, May–June 1996 (Dai Bo 1996), 10+ at Tonggchangou, above 1,800 m, May 1997, in bamboo thickets at the edge of primary broadleaf forest (Dowell *et al.* 1997, Dai Bo *et al.* 1998), at Xining river, October 1999 (Dai Bo *in litt.* 1999);

■ **Yunnan Daxuecao**, Yongshan, Dagan and Yanjin counties, one or two, May 1997 (Dowell *et al.* 1997, Dai Bo *et al.* 1998); Cizhuxiang, **Yanjin county**, December 1996 (two males in KIZCN).

POPULATION Delacour (1933) described this species as “very local, but not rare” on Emei Shan, and the recent records indicate that the relatively extensive forests there must still support a substantial population. Further south, it was found to be locally common during surveys in the Xiaoxiang Ling and Daliang Shan ranges in 1996–1998, and its known range was extended into the extreme north-east of Yunnan (Dai Bo 1996, 1998, Dowell *et al.* 1997, Dai Bo *et al.* 1998). On the basis of records at the two localities where it was recorded during the 1998 surveys, Dai Bo (1998) estimated a mean population density of 59.6 individuals per km², with higher densities in secondary forest (90.0 per km²) than in primary forest (50.2 per km²). However, it is known from only a small number of localities, and it appears to be highly localised in the mountain ranges where it occurs, and its total population may be rather small and, moreover, declining.

ECOLOGY Habitat The Omei Shan *Liocichla* is found in the undergrowth of subtropical broadleaf forest and in secondary forest, scrub and bamboo, mainly between 1,000 and 2,400 m, although it has been recorded down to 600 m (Yu Zhiwei *in litt.* 1997; see Distribution). It appears to be most common at 1,700–2,200 m (P. Alström *in litt.* 1993). During surveys in 1996–1998 it was recorded in pairs or small groups in dense scrub, bamboo thickets and primary and young secondary or replanted forest, at 1,330–2,160 m (Dai Bo 1996, 1998, Dowell *et al.* 1997, Dai Bo *et al.* 1998). It was highly vocal and active, with apparently aggressive interactions which suggested territorial activity, although no evidence of breeding was noted; it appeared to be a rather locally distributed species with a preference for early successional habitats, so it is unlikely to be seriously disadvantaged by forest clearance (Dai Bo 1996, 1998, Dowell *et al.* 1997, Dai Bo *et al.* 1998). However, the reasons for its localised distribution are not clear, but presumably reflect some unknown specialisation in its habitat requirements.

Food This species forages in flocks, and feeds on fruits and insects (Yu Zhiwei *in litt.* 1997).

Breeding There appears to be no information available on the breeding ecology of this species.

Migration It may make seasonal altitudinal movements, as all records during the summer months are from 1,000 m or above, while Hornskov (1988) reported it at down to 600 m in January 1988.

THREATS The Omei Shan Liocichla is one of four threatened members of the suite of five bird species that are entirely restricted to the “Chinese Subtropical Forests Endemic Bird Area”, threats and conservation measures in which are profiled by Stattersfield *et al.* (1998).

Habitat loss The main threat to this species is the loss and fragmentation of its habitat, as much of the natural forest within its range has already been cleared or degraded, and many of the remaining forests are under pressure; for example, forest cover in Sichuan was estimated to have been reduced from 19% to 12.6% between the early 1950s and 1988 (Smil 1993), and the relatively accessible, low-altitude subtropical forests have been disproportionately badly affected (see Table 1). Most of the primary broadleaf forests in southern Sichuan where the species was recorded by Dowell *et al.* (1997) in 1996 and 1997 were scheduled for logging in the next 20–25 years, but a ban on logging in the upper Yangtze basin appears to have led to a complete halt to deforestation within the range of the species (Dowell and Dai Bo 2000; see Measures Taken). However, in addition to legal logging, forest was also being cleared for agriculture or illegally logged, and disturbance was caused (a) by large numbers of people entering the forest to collect bamboo shoots in spring and early autumn and (b) by livestock either grazing in the forest or moving through it to pastures above the treeline (Dowell *et al.* 1997). However, this species is adaptable to secondary habitats, and possibly may not be seriously affected by these activities unless the forests and secondary scrub are completely cleared.

Wild bird trade Trapping for the cagebird trade within China may be a significant threat to the species, as demand for cagebirds is increasing there and wild bird traders make large profits (Wang Ning and Song Jie 2000). It is quite common in the market in Beijing, where an estimated 500 birds were sold from October to December 1999; the wholesale price of one pair from Sichuan was 25 yuan (c.\$2.5) per pair, and they were sold in Beijing for 500 yuan (c.\$50) per pair (Wang Ning and Song Jie 2000). It has appeared in trade in the UK (D. F. Jeggo *in litt.* 1994), and has been found for sale in bird markets in Hong Kong (Dick *et al.* 1992, Yuan Zhiyong 1997).

MEASURES TAKEN Legislation The Omei Shan Liocichla is listed as a protected species in Sichuan province (Yu Zhiwei *in litt.* 1997). The State Forestry Administration announced a

Province	Habitat	Original	Remaining	%	Protected	%
Sichuan	deciduous broadleaf forest	55,413	3,887	7	1,623	2.9
Sichuan	deciduous/evergreen broadleaf forest	34,461	4,048	12	2,123	6.2
Sichuan	subtropical evergreen broadleaf forest	141,433	1,892	1	3,067	2.2
Yunnan	subtropical evergreen broadleaf forest	92,681	12,141	13	7,328	7.9

Table 1. Changes in the extent of natural habitats within this species’s range in southern China. The data in this table are reproduced from MacKinnon *et al.* (1996), and show the estimated areas (both original and remaining in km²) of presumably suitable habitats within this species’s known range, and the area of each habitat estimated within existing protected areas. However, it is important to note that this only gives an indication of the extent of reduction of presumed habitats, as there is no information on the time-scale over which they have been lost, and this species does not necessarily occur throughout each habitat in each province.

total ban on the export of wild birds from China from December 1999 (Wang Wei verbally 2000), but there are likely to be problems in strictly enforcing this legislation. It is listed on Appendix II of CITES.

Protected areas It occurs in or near the following protected areas: Emei Shan Protected Scenic Site (100 km², forest apparently in good condition but disturbed by very large numbers of tourists) and Mabian Dafengding Nature Reserve (340 km², forests on lower parts of the hills apparently damaged) (sizes and condition from MacKinnon *et al.* 1996). Emei Shan is one of China's five sacred mountains (Robson 1989) and has therefore not been subject to forest clearance, but development for tourism has caused some localised forest loss there, particularly in the subtropical zone (MJC).

Habitat protection and management Until very recently, one of the main threats to the species was habitat destruction through commercial logging of primary forest; however, in August 1998 the Chinese government announced a ban on logging in the upper Yangtze basin, which has subsequently been fully implemented, apparently leading to a complete halt to deforestation within its range in Sichuan (Dowell and Dai Bo 2000; see Measures Taken under Sichuan Partridge *Arborophila rufipectus*).

MEASURES PROPOSED Legislation The listing of Omei Shan *Liocichla* as a nationally protected species in China should be considered, particularly as part of a strategy to control the internal and international trading of this species as a cagebird.

Protected areas Following a series of surveys in south-central Sichuan and north-eastern Yunnan in 1996–1998, Dowell *et al.* (1997), Dai Bo (1998) and Dai Bo *et al.* (1998) made a number of recommendations relevant to the conservation of this species and its habitat there, including the establishment of several new protected areas and an extension to Mabian Dafengding Nature Reserve. Their surveys were principally targeted at Sichuan Partridge, and the full details of their recommendations (and those of Yu Zhiwei *in litt.* 1997) are given in the account for that species. The long-term plan of the Wildlife Division of the Sichuan Forestry Department (*per* Dowell and Dai Bo 2000) to establish several new reserves to protect broadleaf subtropical forest is also described in the equivalent section under Sichuan Partridge. MacKinnon *et al.* (1996) made the following recommendations for the protected areas where Omei Shan *Liocichla* has been recorded: at Mabian Dafengding Nature Reserve, jointly manage with Meigu Dafengding reserve; at Emei Shan Protected Scenic Site, gazette as a nature reserve (if not already done so), control tourism and strengthen research work.

Research Information on the distribution and habitat requirements of Omei Shan *Liocichla* is currently incomplete and further surveys and ecological studies are required, targeted at this species (which has distinctive calls that are easy to distinguish from other species: Dai Bo 1996) and the other threatened birds with similar habitat requirements and range (including Sichuan Partridge, Gold-fronted Fulvetta *Alcippe variegaticeps* and Silver Oriole *Oriolus mellianus*). For example, unknown populations may still exist in southern Sichuan (Yu Zhiwei *in litt.* 1997), or even in the provinces to the south-east which have similar subtropical broadleaf forests (e.g. Guizhou and Guangxi: see Stattersfield *et al.* 1998). Ecological studies should aim to determine whether the localised distribution of this species is related to some (as yet unknown) habitat specialisation, and therefore make appropriate recommendations for the management of the forests where it occurs.